

The SL Arts and Life Magazine

Rezz

february 2014

The Key to Golden Hills

Chapter One: Philip

by Stihly Augenblick and Hitomi Tamatzui

Kat Carter: Nail Artiste!

interviewed by Stargazer Daylight

Reinventing Ourselves

by Alcinia Rossini

Cathedral Dreamer

fiction by Art Blue

Happy Rezz Day

by Harry Bailey



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The Key to Golden Hills - Part One: Philip

rez welcomes to our pages the gifted writing team of Stihly Augenblick and Hitomi Tamatzui, who bring us a retro-style noir suspense story - this the first of six exciting installments.

Harpoon Microfiction author and long-time contributor Crap Mariner considers the difficulty of outwitting the TSA.

The Cathedral Dreamer Art Blue is back this month with a story about the creation of a new world, the Genesis.

Happy Lupercalia, My Love Ever wonder about just where Valentine's Day came from? Gudrun Gausman explains it all, together with her usual helpful suggestions.

Kat Carter - Nail Artiste! Fashion writer StarGazer Daylight interviews nail artist Kat Carter, and together they tell us about stunning nails available for women (and men!).

Reinventing Ourselves First time contributor Alcinia Rossini shares with us her insights into the meaning of communication in a virtual world and how it enriches us.

Happy Rezz Day The Perfect Gentleman waxes nostalgic about rezz days and staying forever young at heart.

About the Cover:

Art Blue follows up his futuristic first piece, The Artefact, with an equally compelling look inside of his dream, or is it a dream? Either way, Art leaves us with more questions than answers. Gem Preiz, the creator of this "Prison and Freedom" is to be thanked for this whirlwind of actors and slaves.





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The Key to C

Chapter One: Phi

A serialized noir crime sto
by Stihly Augenblick

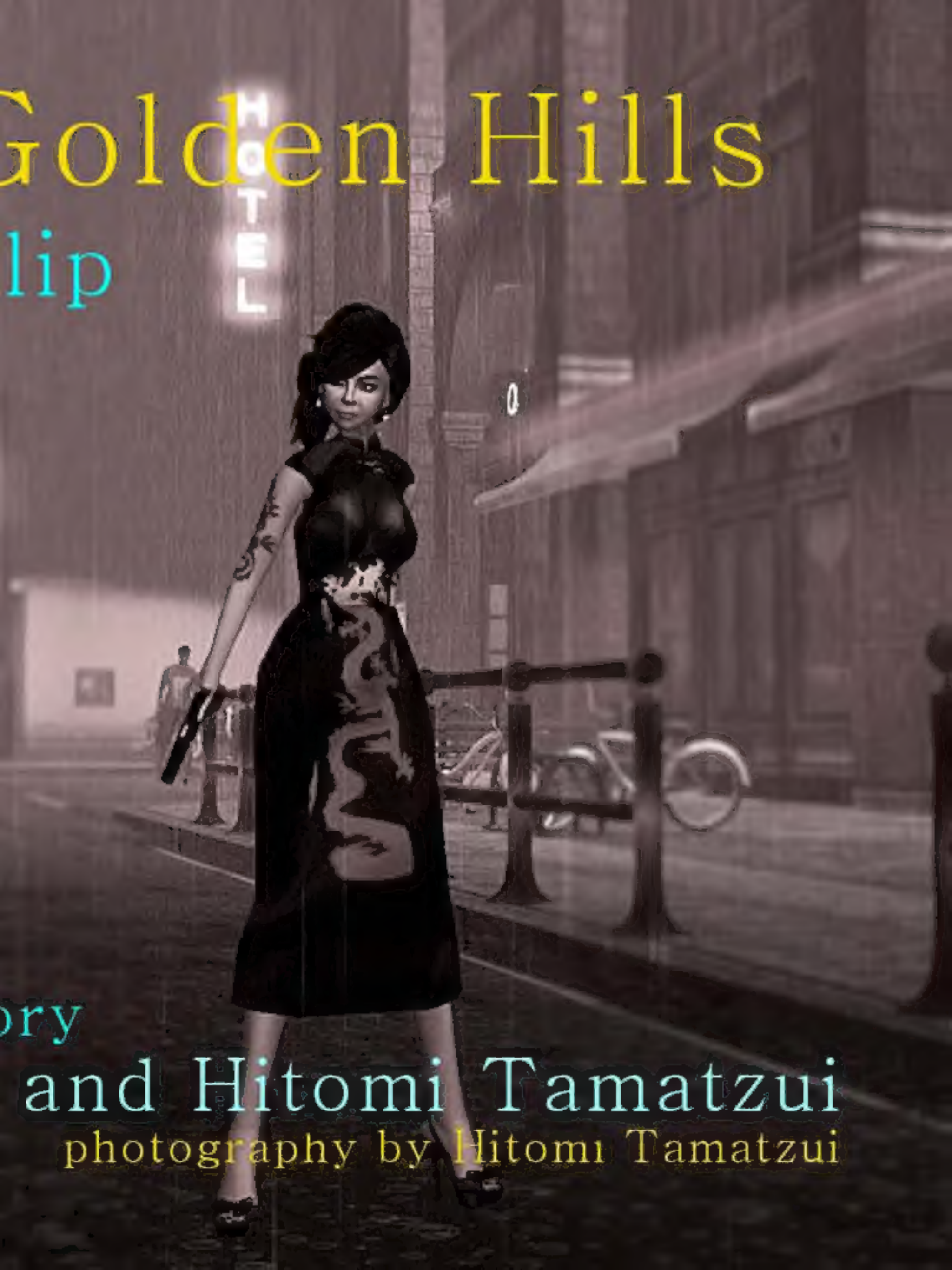
Golden Hills

lip

ory

and Hitomi Tamatzui

photography by Hitomi Tamatzui





I hurt all over. The morning sun's rays fought their way through the sooty window into my dingy hotel room. I sat up and looked over my wounds and bruises and tried to shake the cobwebs. Soft breathing from the other side of the bed reminded me that I wasn't alone this ugly morning. Jing Wei, my, well, what was she? Maybe companion? Possibly accomplice? Whatever she was, she was still asleep, softly breathing and occasionally whimpering in Chinese. What the hell had I gotten myself into this time?



Looking over at her, I was consoled

from my morning misery by the possibility that maybe she was finally getting some of the first peace she'd gotten in a long time. She was so small and frail looking, but tangled in whatever madness we'd stumbled into. My mind was whirling with possibilities.

What was her role? Victim or perpetrator? What did she know? When did she know it? Who was involved? It was too early for this kind of thinking. Like a safety valve, my mind switched to thinking about life before all this madness started; back to my childhood - - a simpler, happier, time.

I sat up gingerly and drifted off to a time without pain, sadness, or trouble - - back to a farm an eternity ago.



I was always big. My father's joke was that, as the only child, I had gotten the lion's share of the food. Kidding aside, he didn't wait to put me to work on the farm. "Hard work never hurt anyone."

By the time I was in grade school, farm chores had made me as strong and tough as any of the other boys and no one messed with me. It also didn't hurt that I was taller than most of them. As I grew, it always seemed like my body outraced my brain. I was always big, but always clumsy.



Football saved me. I loved the aggression, hard physical work, pounding, and the drills that helped me throw away that adolescent awkwardness. Like the farm, I worked hard and, after a while, success started to come. The coaches made me quarterback, and from this position, I could do anything. I loved having the ball on every play, being the center of attention, not only of the team, but also of the crowd, including my father. The attention I got reached beyond my tiny school, all across the state, even the country. By the time I was a senior in high school, my father was getting daily calls and visits from college coaches. I was going to college, my father's dream.

Hard times fell on the farm and my father had to sell it and rent a small general store in a nearby town. Football success meant nothing to my father; he put me right to work in the store, hoisting boxes up and down from the basement. "Hard work never hurt anyone, Phil." Still, he'd reach up and slap me on the back. "I wish your mother was here to see you." He rarely spoke of my mother.

When I was old enough to question where my mom was, he simply explained that my mother had died shortly after I was born. "Phil, this wasn't your fault; God needed another angel." I wasn't sad; my father was as loving a parent as any two I saw - - tough, demanding, but fair and loving.



My days were full of studies and football, my evenings: hard work. My only days off were Sundays, quarterbacking

my little high school's team. We won far more than we should have, really. Small though we were, we worked hard and, as a team, we overachieved. My father attended every game.

Wildly cheering, his voice from the stands was unmistakable. I would hear him yelling after a touchdown. "That's my boy!" Our success was noticed locally, and even around the state. I had no inkling of it, but my achievements on the football field were considered phenomenal. To me, it was just a day off from chores.



Working in the store after grueling practices, I enjoyed the cool of the basement, especially in the summer evenings. Moving heavy crates was just more repetitions of the weights we lifted in the weight room. I enjoyed hearing the sounds of customers coming in

and the ringing of the cash register; another sale to help keep us going another day.



Local Football Player Has Scouts Filling HS Stands...New Def End for Pacific Colleges?

When news really started to spread about my football talents, colleges descended on our town "like locusts," my father would complain, albeit proudly. Coaches would wait outside the store for their audience with my father and me, to sell their school. College football was booming and I was the latest "hot property," my father would say.

My father would sit, fidgeting, as

coaches would go on about their schools and everything we would get if I went. Sometimes the visitors would ask to speak with my father privately. He later told me what they were offering to persuade me to sign. Cash, a house, a new business; my father would have none of it. "Am I selling my son? I want my son to get an education, not be a piece of meat!" His bottom line was whether a scholarship was permanent. "If my boy's hurt, you paying for him to finish school?" He'd stare coaches down. Of course, all agreed. My father would demand all their promises be made "in writing, in front of a lawyer." This winnowed the field. "Phil, my boy, everyone's got an angle, you always need to see what it is and have your own.



This went on through my senior year: the visits, the negotiations, my father standing by the door ushering yet an-

other coach on their way, hat in hand. After the last one left, it was back to work for me. One afternoon was different.



As I was resting in the cellar of the store, I heard the usual cash register ring. This time, however, what followed was the sound of my father's voice getting more and more agitated and adamant. He usually enjoyed lively debate with customers, but I sensed growing distress in his voice. Suddenly, I heard him slam his cane on the floor and in a very angry voice yell "No more! I've had it with you blood-sucking leeches. Go to hell!"

Then I heard stranger's voice, equally enraged: "You asked for this, you cheap old bastard!" Two thunderous shotgun blasts followed, then the sound of something heavy hitting the floor, like

a sack of potatoes. Only I knew it wasn't potatoes. I was momentarily frozen with the worst fear I'd ever felt, worse than anything I'd felt on the football field, or even on the farm when the crazy old bull got loose and chased me. My legs felt like rubber. What if they came for me?



I heard the screen door slam as heavy footsteps receded from the store. I raced upstairs only to encounter a nightmarish scene. My father lay bleeding, the cash drawer missing, and I could hear the squealing brakes of a car pulling up to the door.



I knelt over my father. His eyes were closed and I could hear the rattling sounds of his dying breaths as blood poured from his chest. I couldn't help him; I couldn't even call for help. In the moments I knelt by his side, my fear was replaced with enormous rage, worse than any I had ever felt in my life. Those bastards. They killed my father for a few dollars. I'd kill them myself, no matter what kind of guns they had.

I sprang to my feet and raced to the door to see a car pulling away as one of the killers jumped in, still holding the smoking shotgun. Mindless, crazed with rage, I sprinted after the car, faster than I'd ever run from a linebacker, fueled by the purest fury.



I couldn't catch the car, or even get a glimpse of the license plate. I sprinted after it until I was exhausted, collapsing to the cold, rainy macadam, retching with the effort. At that moment, my life as a beloved son, a football star, a college bound success, was over. I was thrust, unprepared and unwilling, into adulthood. I didn't care about football, fame, or college, or anything like that anymore. The only thing I needed, the only thing that mattered to me, was to find my father's assassins and destroy them. My life took a new course, a sad one, but the only one I could now imagine.



After my father's death, I quit the football team. Football had no interest to me. The colleges who had courted me for years lost interest. I just wanted to

get my sheepskin and get as far away from this town as I could. I did the only thing that was left for a young man with no future and no prospects: I joined the Army. Basic training was a breeze for me and my physical abilities and quick mind led to the suggestion that I go for officer's candidate school. I had no interest whatsoever in this. I wanted to become a cop as soon as possible. My father had always told me that was an honorable profession. He respected the law and the police and I wanted to do anything I could do to be the man he'd always hoped I'd be. I requested assignment to the military police and after four years of knocking around drunken GIs, something I actually grew to enjoy, my tour was up and I got my walking papers.



The day I was discharged, I looked over the cards on the police posting board for the nearest job opening. I saw one

for a police trainee in Madison City. I remembered passing through the place they called "Mad City" on my way to boot camp. Seemed like a typical small city, bigger than my hometown, and seedier, but pretty much the same deal. Decision made, I slung my duffel over my shoulder, tucked my final pay envelope into my pocket, and bought a ticket on a Greyhound to my new life.

I sailed through the rookie training, mainly comprised of learning the few laws governing what a police officer could and could not do, and making sure I could shoot straight. My good service record and military police experience more than satisfied the chief of police in Mad City. Soon I had a shiny badge, a crisp uniform, a war surplus .45, and a nightstick. I also had a partner, a woman.



Mad City, which was mostly average or below average as far as modern innovations, had seized on the relatively new notion of hiring female officers. They had at least a half dozen, some already sergeants. I'd heard about female cops in big cities like Los Angeles, but it was the last thing I expected out here in the boonies. When I thought about it, I thought I realized what the angle was: you could pay a female cop half what a male cop would command. The city could get double the cops for the same money. Still, I was more than a little skeptical when I met my supervising officer, a slight Asian woman. Looks would prove deceiving.

One night early on in my rookie beat, we got a drunk and disorderly call at a bar known to cater to some rough characters, mostly steelworkers, hardened and fearless from working long hours on the high steel. From my days as an MP, I knew the type, young guys with some money to drink and time on their hands, feeling their oats, spoiling for a fight. The head bouncer met us outside. "These knuckleheads are squaring off over a nickel beer. We just need a little more muscle to break this up."

"Haven't seen you before, you must be a rookie." He turned to my supervising officer and said, "Oh, Sergeant Mitohi, ma'am I am sure glad they sent you to help this greenhorn out." He must have

seen the surprise on my face. "You don't know nothing, greenhorn." I shrugged and took off my hat and readied my nightstick. She looked at me and shook her head. "No, put that away." She stalked into the bar and stood between the two groups, already squaring off to brawl. "Knock this bull off, or you're all coming downtown with me and you won't enjoy the ride." She spoke in an even tone, matter-of-factly, as if she was talking about the weather. One of the younger rough-necks spoke up.

"What are you gonna do about it, lady cop?" He looked around, as if expecting a laugh. The bar was eerily silent. "You momma's boys gonna let a broad tell you what to do?" Emboldened by booze, he stepped towards Mitohi, who seemed to measure him almost contemptuously. I started to step up, figuring I better be ready to run interference on this, like a good partner. A glance from Mitohi froze me in my tracks. "Don't even, Phil. This boy wants to come downtown with momma and spit shine my shoes with his loose tongue. Isn't that so, little boy?" This was met by uproarious laughter.

Enraged, the young drunk raised his bottle and charged Mitohi. Or rather, he started to charge the petite officer. With uncanny quickness, she stepped towards the burly worker. Graceful as a ballet dancer, she spun on one heel and

deflected the descending bottle. Then, in one smooth, swift, sequence, she slammed her heel into his instep, her elbow into his groin, and the back of her head into his chin. She seized the arm holding the beer bottle and flipped him over her shoulder and on to his back. She slid her knee under his arm and pressed his hand down, causing the bottle to fall out of his grasp, locking his arm in a painful arm bar. All the young would-be assailant could do was groan.

She surveyed the other patrons. Not a hair of her coif was disturbed. "Anyone else new to town?" She leaned over the groaning wretch. "Welcome to Mad City. As a sign of our largesse to strangers, I am not going to arrest you for attempted assault and battery on a police officer. If you behave, I may not break your arm, so you won't lose your job." "How does that sound?" She pressed on his arm for emphasis. Her offer was met with fervent nodding and she released him. "Now settle down, the next round's on Phil." "Phil, pay the bartender." The announcement of free beer provoked a round of cheers and the men settled back in their seats. The bouncer looked at me as I stood there, mouth agape. "Pay attention and learn, greenhorn."

On the ride back, she deflected my praise. "Phil, this isn't the MPs any more. These people aren't criminals;

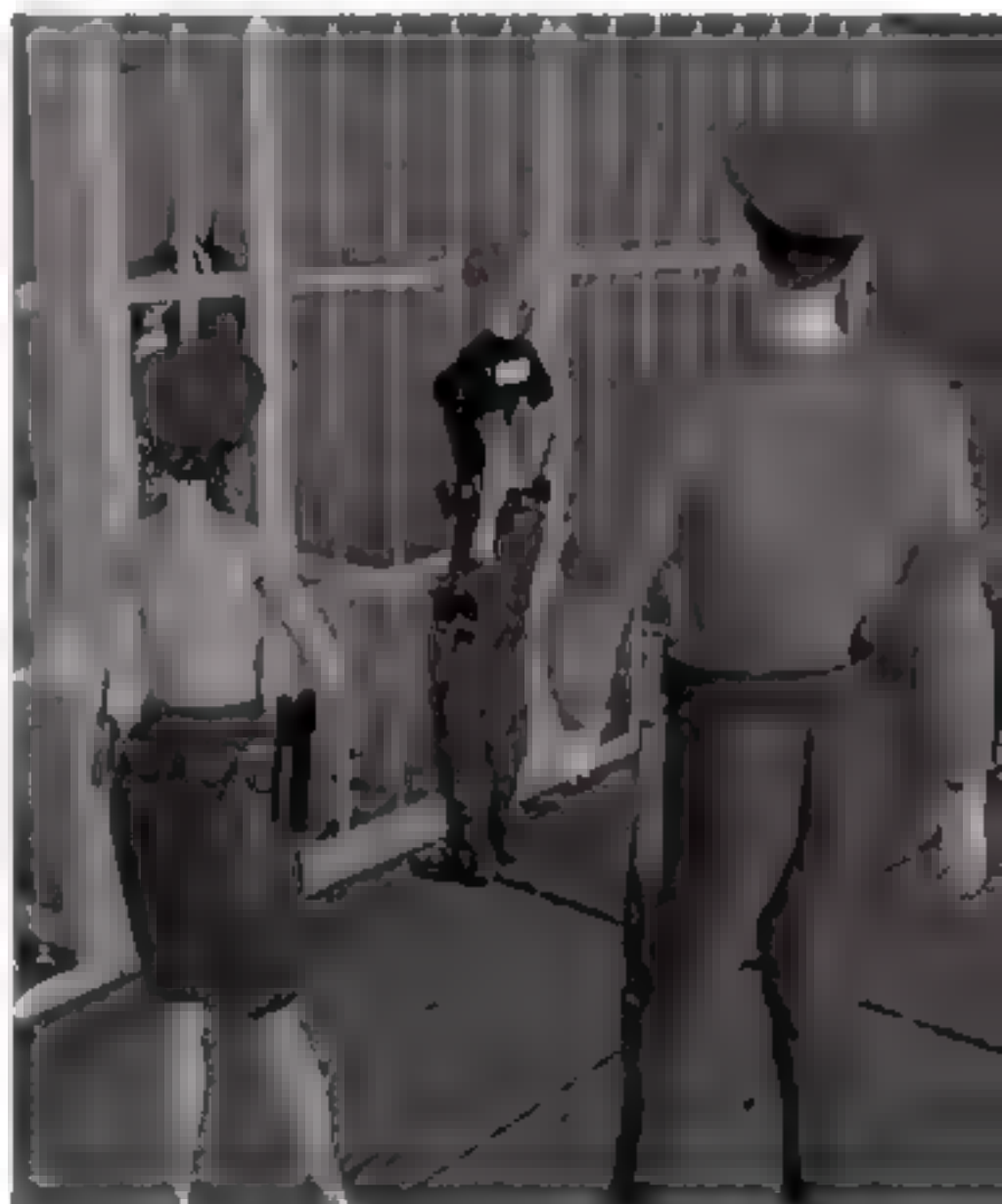
they're just working stiff. We need to keep the peace and keep them from hurting each other or doing something they'll live to regret. Use your brain, it will get you a lot further than those muscles."

I spent the next few years learning everything she had to teach me about police work. I walked a thousand beats with her and learned everything I ever needed to know about the seedy underbelly of Mad City.

I learned from Mitohi. We became quite a team. I learned to trust this tiny woman with my life. When she knew she had my unadulterated regard for her physical skills, she, grudgingly almost, would let me physically take down some of the perpetrators myself. Much to her delight and my chagrin, she would critique my technique as I was subduing suspects. "No, Phil, you just lost his arm, what if he has a knife?" "You haven't cuffed him yet, Phil. I'd like to finish this collar while I'm still young and pretty." "Phil, Phil, Phil, do you have any skills at all?" She seemed to take great delight in taunting me, but her laughing advice saved me from serious harm on many occasions. When I realized how little I knew about police work, my education truly began.

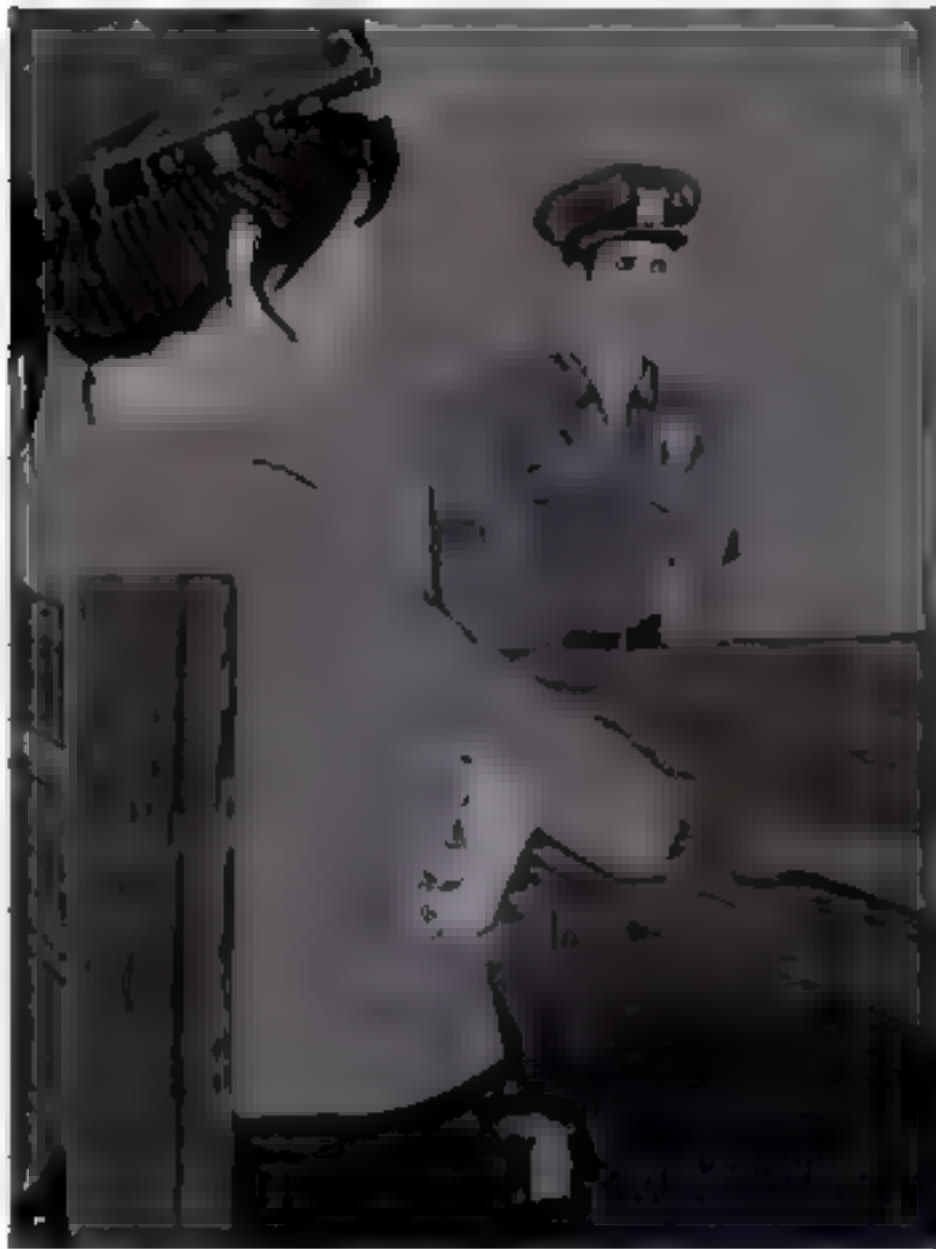
Mitohi was one of the good cops. She would tease the hell out of me, but it

was as much for my benefit as for her amusement. She never stopped calling me 'rookie'. In her eyes, I still was. Not every precinct cop was like her. I learned this when we teamed up with another sergeant, Sergeant Palienta, to collar one tough as nails smack dealer. He put up quite a fight, even for the three of us, but we took him down and got him in cuffs, spitting, cursing, and bleeding. When we had him in the cell, he continued to spray us with profanities, with some particularly filthy ones for Palienta.



I could see she was seething, adrenaline still pumping, as mine was, after the

tussle. She looked at us, utterly furious. "I need to take a statement from this one. For my report." "You can go now, I got this" Mitohi gave her a knowing look. "I'll hang out with the rookie, watch the doors." I wondered why the



doors needed watching. "Well, alright, but you're responsible for that one," gesturing at me.

I wondered what the angle was. Mitohi turned to me, back to Palienta, and said in a very low voice said: "you may as well see this, Phil." I was about to reply, but she put her forefinger to her lip; this wasn't the time to discuss this.

What I saw in the next half hour left me stunned and speechless and changed how I saw being a cop. Palienta, with great relish, proceeded to silently beat the cuffed prisoner, with her gloved fists, a blackjack, a nightstick, and utterly without mercy. There was no pretense of questioning or taking a statement, only screams, then moans for mercy which went unheeded, then the wet sound of a nightstick on defenseless flesh, long after the prisoner had passed out. Eventually, Palienta emerged from the cell, covered in sweat and the prisoner's blood. "That's one for the prison hospital ward, or the morgue, I'm not sure." "You didn't see or hear anything, rookie. He got all that resisting arrest, right?" In shock, all I could do was look at Mitohi. She nodded slightly. "Yeah, he put up quite a fight." "Right answer, Phil," she said, piercing me with her eyes. Message received.

We didn't talk much about that incident. It obviously affected me and I guess that showed her that I would never be the kind of a cop Palienta was. "Rookie, I'm sorry you had to see that, but it was only a matter of time. I thought you were ready." I learned a lot about the other side of police work that afternoon. There were things you never learned in any police training. Never rat out a fellow officer. When respect for the uniform was not given, it could be taken, brutally. Police had the power

of judge, jury, and even executioner. How we chose to use it was what made us good cops, or, in Palienta's case, very bad ones.

Afterwards, Mitohi clearly considered my training as a beat cop to be complete. She sponsored me for a promotion to sergeant and eventually, after helping me solve a particularly nasty child kidnapping and murder spree, for detective.



I traded I traded my hat and uniform for a trench coat and fedora. I said my goodbyes to Mitohi, the only time I ever saw her cry. "Watch your back, rookie, momma can't anymore." I promised I would, but she was already walking away.

As a homicide detective, I could finally re-open my father's case, long since gone cold. I'd have my revenge, but not

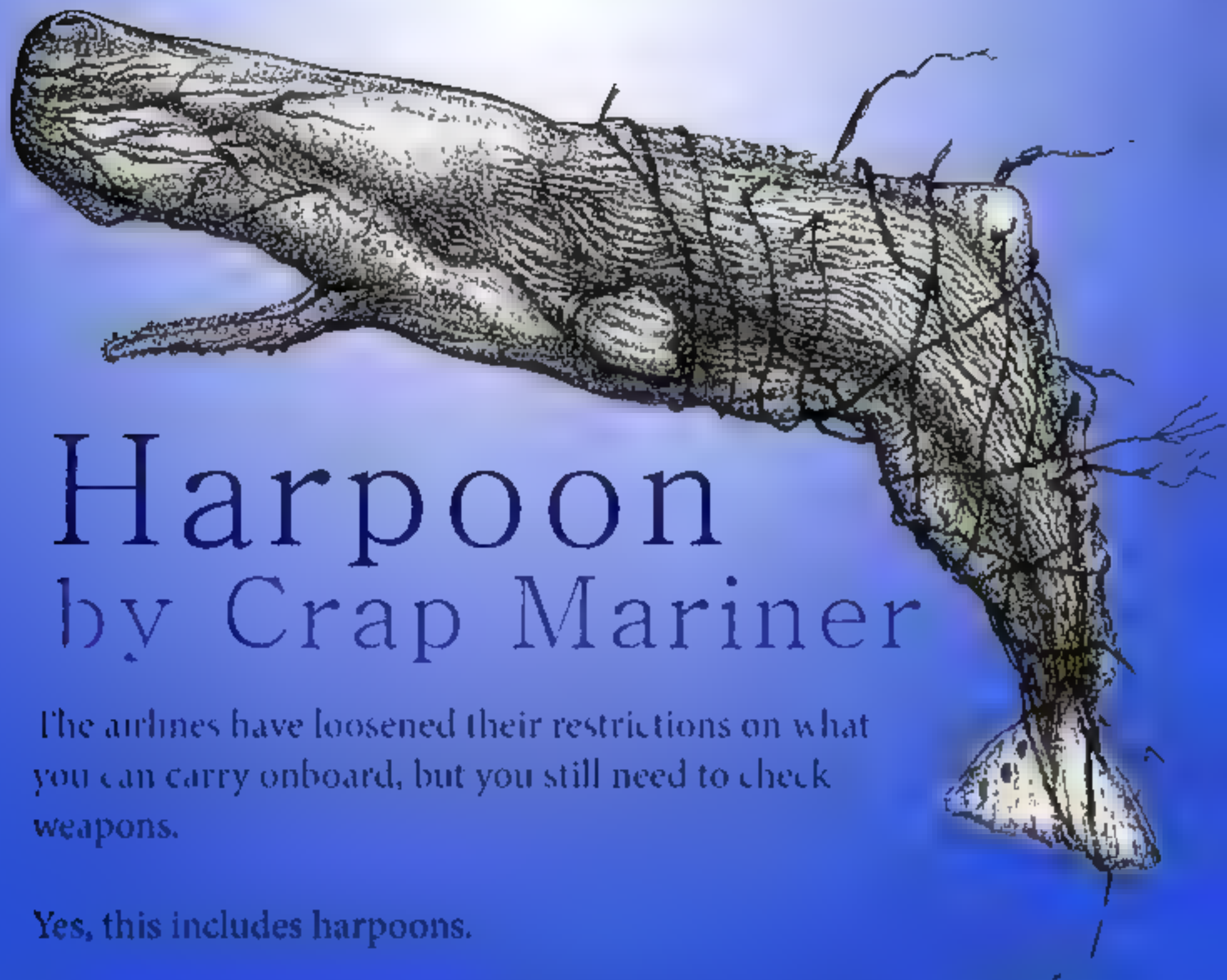
right away

My precinct Captain, Ralph Langer, continued to take an interest in me, something he had done even as I was moving up the ranks. He had partnered me with Mitohi originally and this time he partnered me with Larry Chen, another Asian detective with an uncanny ability to see beyond the obvious. Larry had connections in Chinatown, an area I couldn't think of working alone. We became friends, training for hours together in the gym. Chen taught me how to augment my natural size and strength with a variety of martial arts skills. These were the skills which Mitohi had teased me relentlessly about not having. We became a formidable duo on the street; 'my one-two punch', Langer would boast.

We did well under Langer's tutelage. Our caseload grew as we cracked one case after another. And being noticed by the brass wasn't the only result.

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Look for the next installment of "The Key to Golden Hills" in next month's issue of rez. Chapter Two: Angie, coming to a newstand near you.



Harpoon

by Crap Mariner

The airlines have loosened their restrictions on what you can carry onboard, but you still need to check weapons.

Yes, this includes harpoons.

Not that you can do much with a harpoon. You'll need a clear aisle for a good harpooning, but killer whales usually strike during feeding sessions. Which is when flight attendants are out with the beverage cart, blocking your throw.

Sitting next to a rampaging killer whale? You're probably getting crushed against the window.

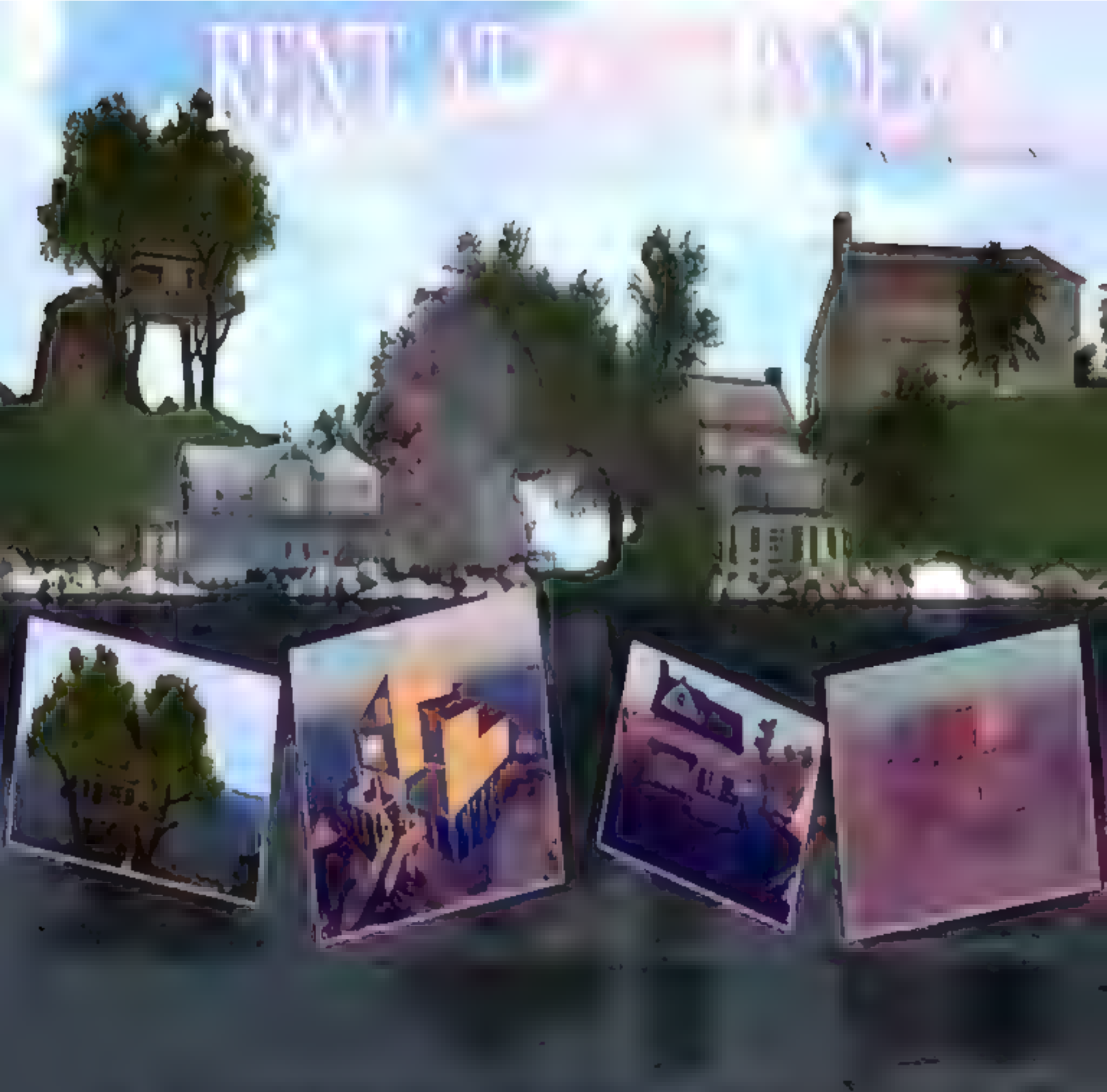
God forbid you're trapped in the middle seat between two of them. Whatever happened to the airlines making oversized passengers buy two tickets?

The background is a dark, moody illustration. In the upper half, there's a cityscape with buildings and a bridge, possibly a suspension bridge, silhouetted against a dark sky. In the lower half, a large, glowing, ethereal figure, possibly a dragon or a large creature, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The overall color palette is dark with some highlights from the city lights and the glowing figure.

Rhis After Dark

On the Dan Fa 3m

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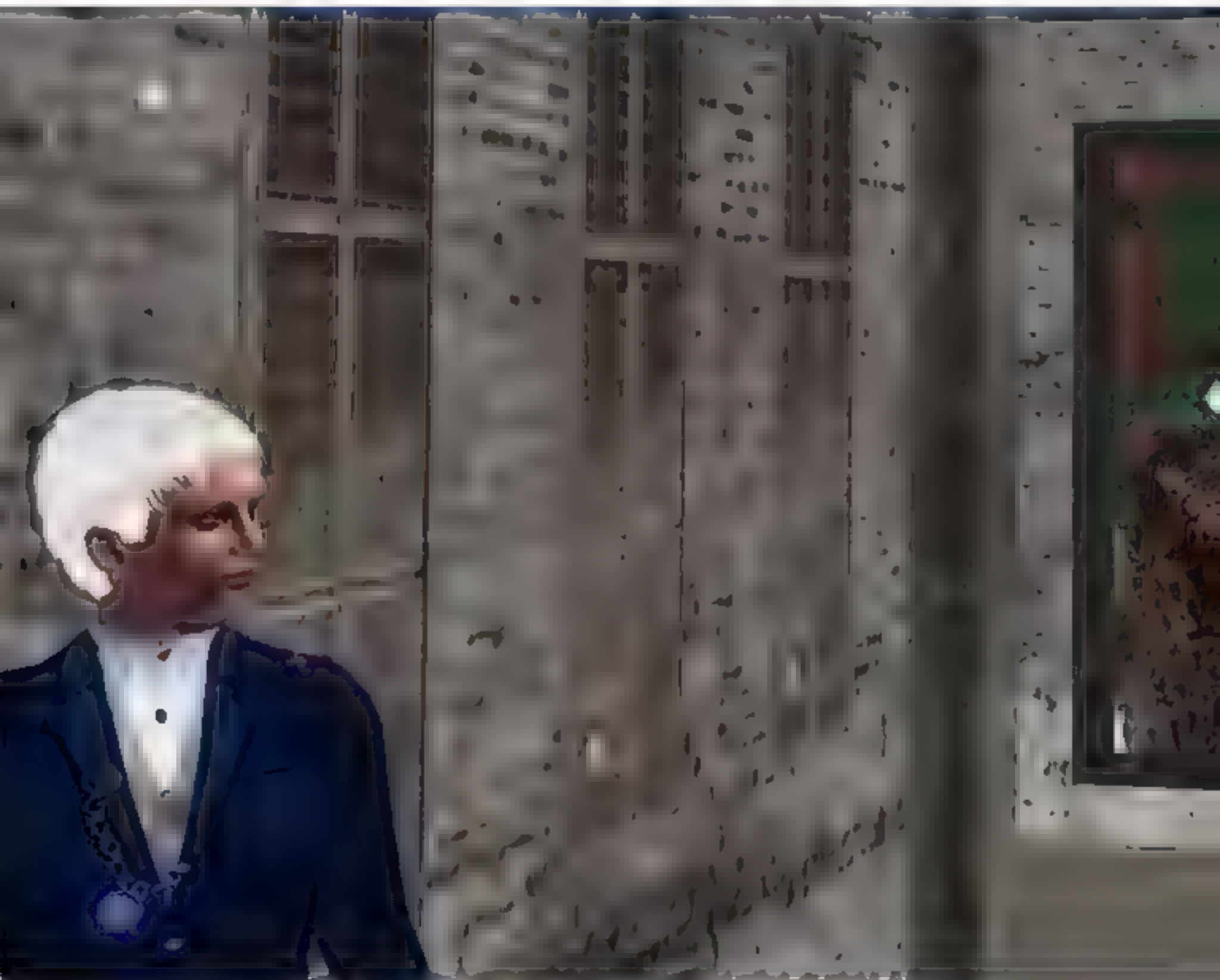
Come explore our sim with live music shows on
Sundays and Tuesdays!
Where you can live where you love to play!!
Check out our rentals of all styles

Contact Meegan Danitz or Corialote Dougall

The Cathedral Dream

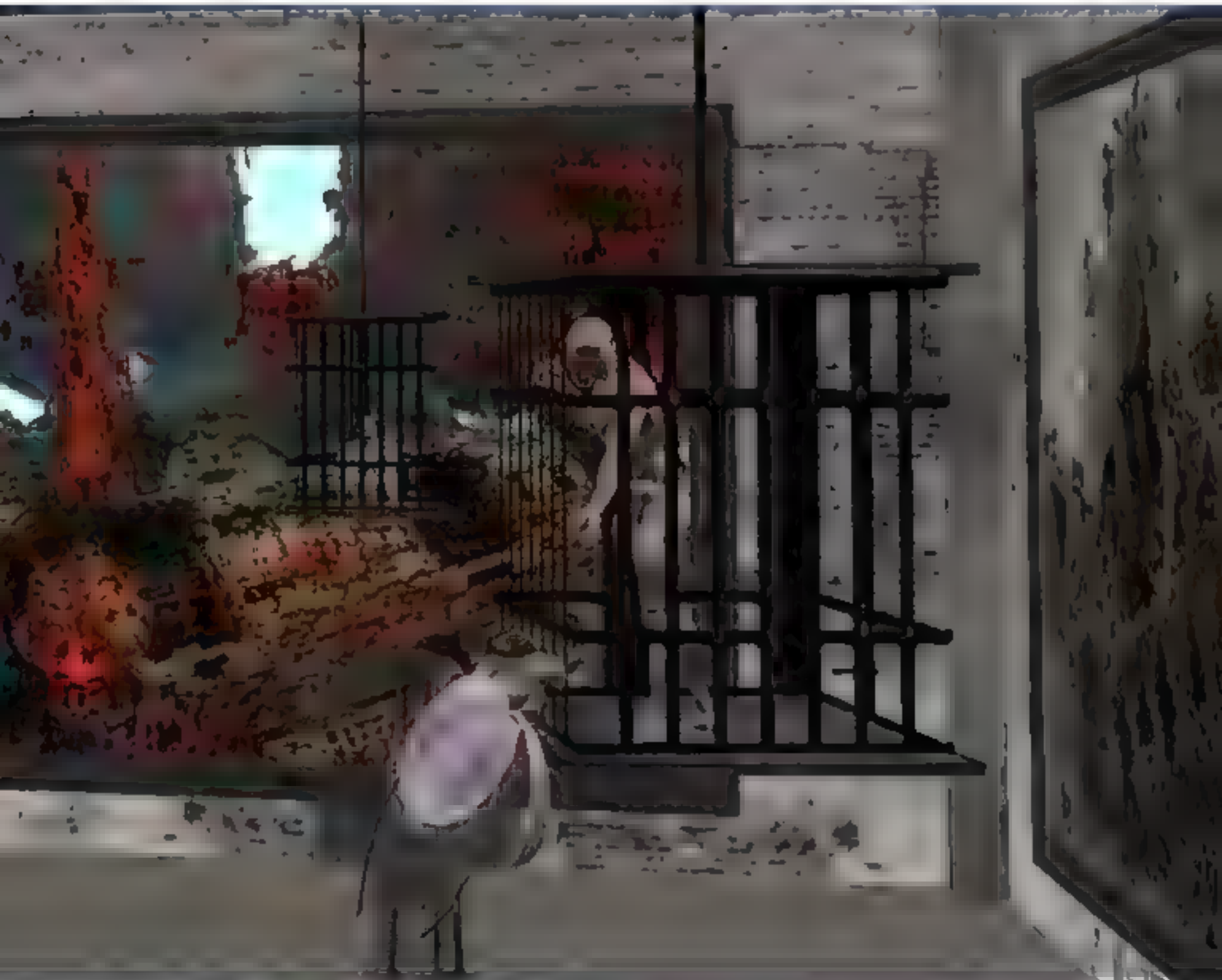
by Art Blue

The creator Gem Preiz
abandoned hangar, po
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reamer

about this hall I call "prison and freedom": "...it looks like an old
populated with jailed creatures. Fractals evoke the frantic human
structions - the immense scale which is sometimes beyond belief - but
to decay or be destroyed or forgotten. Evocation of the human
in its whirlwind, the individuals who are the actors and the slaves."



The Cathedral Dreamer sends his beetle

I, standing on a pedestal, more a skeleton made of steel, on a rock, levitating in the middle of a world, gazing at the pictorial symbol in front of me. Next to it the icon of a compass. Or is this true for a nexus, a singularity?

Do I have to set a route? Deep inside I know the meaning, but it does not come to my mind. "Zeus meets Zuse," it would be if word gets out. (Comes up from inside of me, penetrates my brain.)

But who is Zeus? Who is Zuse? I press on the footprint and receive a message on the screen: "North, East, South, West." I decide on East.

All senses, all sensations get unreal. I don't see anything, but I feel for a long time the emptiness. A mechanical voice, I call it Mechanotron, says to me: "Teleport completed in 0.1341 seconds, distance 119.95 meters, standing pose activated."

I am standing in front of a door. There are humans, standing in a strange way, in a way artificial. What are they? I ask. "What are you? Who are you?" A woman laughs.

"I am Jami Mills, an avatar like you, Art Blue." "An awatara," I repeat. "No, not an awatara, an avatar. You said you would come as First Prim" On hearing

this, a male avatar turns and says, "Awatara is not so bad." This was the very first naming of us in year 1997 as Iain Banks wrote his novel *Excession*; however, this term was only used in translations and disappeared soon from the surface.

"And what are we doing here?" I am asking, "the avatars?" Jami Mills laughing again, "You invited us for today at 2.22 PM to visit a Genesis, the birth of a world."

I keep silent. The birth of a world. Jami Mills continues. "The one of Gem Preiz, fractals, you said. *The Cathedral Dreamer of Fractals*. That's the title of your article you announced would be published in *rez* magazine. Now let us see it" and she smiles at me. I get dizzy. This smile. Real – unreal – beautiful.

I notice another footprint sign and I pace through the door towards it. "This I did already. Pressing brings no result," says one of the avatars wearing a tag on his lapel, 'Curator Neo Gurgelwasser.'

Curator is from old Latin, I remember. Curare. Healing, knowing, conserving. Rome, bread and circuses. Pictures rise up in me. I was on the bleachers. 1000 Eyes have been looking at me and I raise my hand.

A boom is coming in my ear and I let my hand fall on the footprint. "WOW,"

I hear from Neo Gurgelwasser, "WOW." "Let there be light," says one of the spectators. "WOW," now from Jami Mills. Let it be fractal. I think it shall be, as I have to write an article on this.

a dynamic load; and in SL, a static installation. This way you wanted it Art Blue – or? – I mean you, First Prim." I nod. "This way I wanted it." Perhaps. I don't know.

"First Prim has Alzheimers. His code is infected by a virus. Step back, please."

In front of me, of us, rises up out of the water an installation, with such a vehemence that one cringes. In no arena, no entry in the Coliseum, made such an impact of a manifestation.

"Godlike," I hear it whispering. "A genesis happens."

Then I hear the murmur of voices. I remember some of them, shortly before Babel happened and the tower collapsed. I hear syllables, words without any meaning to me. *This is all done without a region restart. Without an avatar eject. We are in the middle of a terraforming. OAR-upload.*

Then I hear someone speaking. Gem Preiz is noted on his tag. *Dual world performance.* "Dual world performance," I repeat

"Yes," Gem Preiz says. "Now we move to SL. There has been a set at LEA6 for a few days. Here in Metropolis, there is

There I hear a siren. A glider approaches. Two white dressed avatars step out wearing surgical masks. They grab me. "First Prim has Alzheimers. His code is infected by a virus. Step back, please."

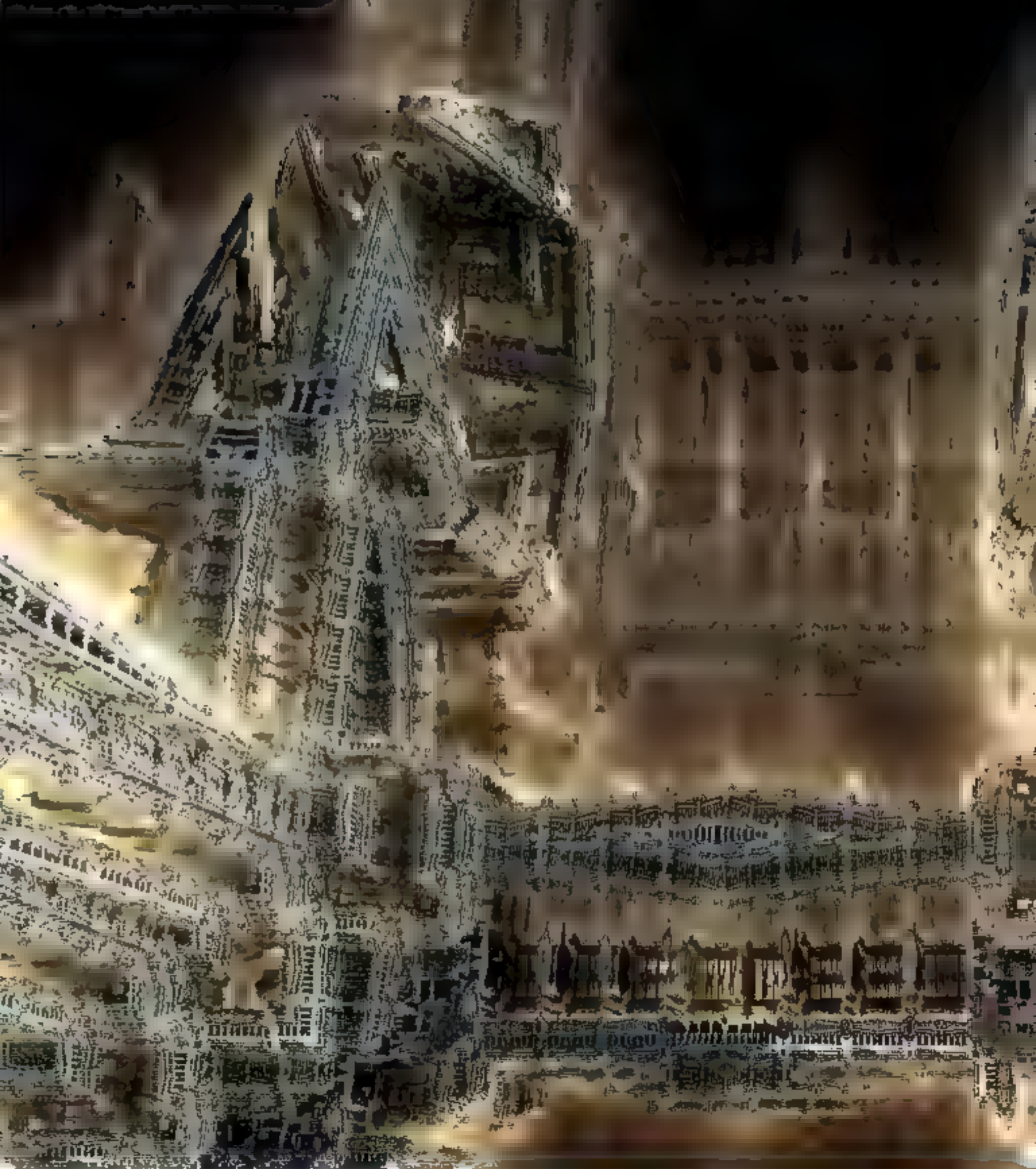
We fly, passing a mountain. Vulcanicus is engraved on it and a museum, *Mechanic Dreams*. I just can read before the serum they injected in me takes over.

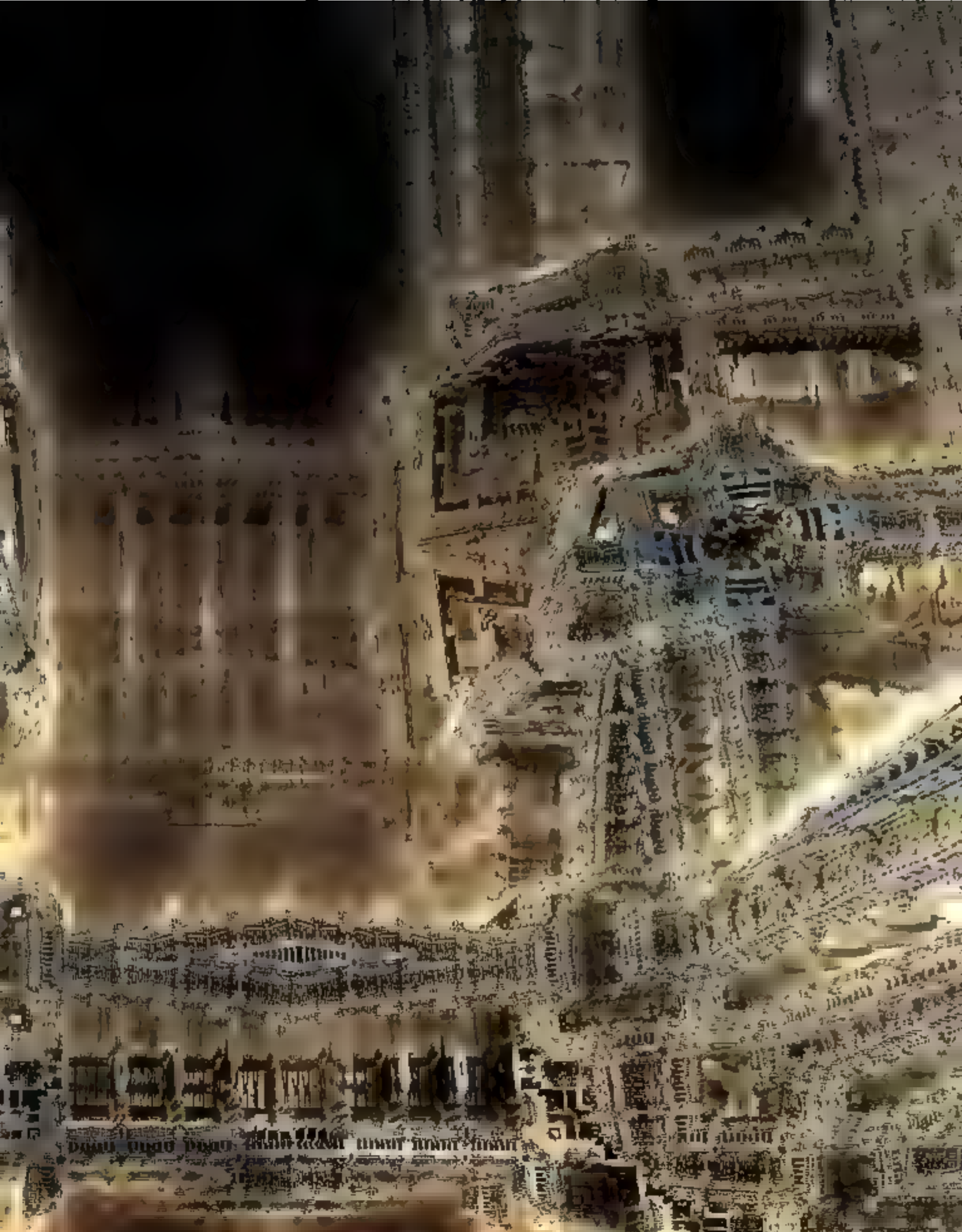
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I open my eyes. I look around. A nice room, sun is shining in. I lay in a bed. "Where am I? What happened?" I hear a voice. "You are in a hospital my dear. You had a dream." The woman speaking I recognize as the one smiling, obviously in my dream, as she looks at me now, concerned. "A dream? So it was not true that I was experiencing a Genesis of a world?" I ask. The lady addressed moved her head to a person



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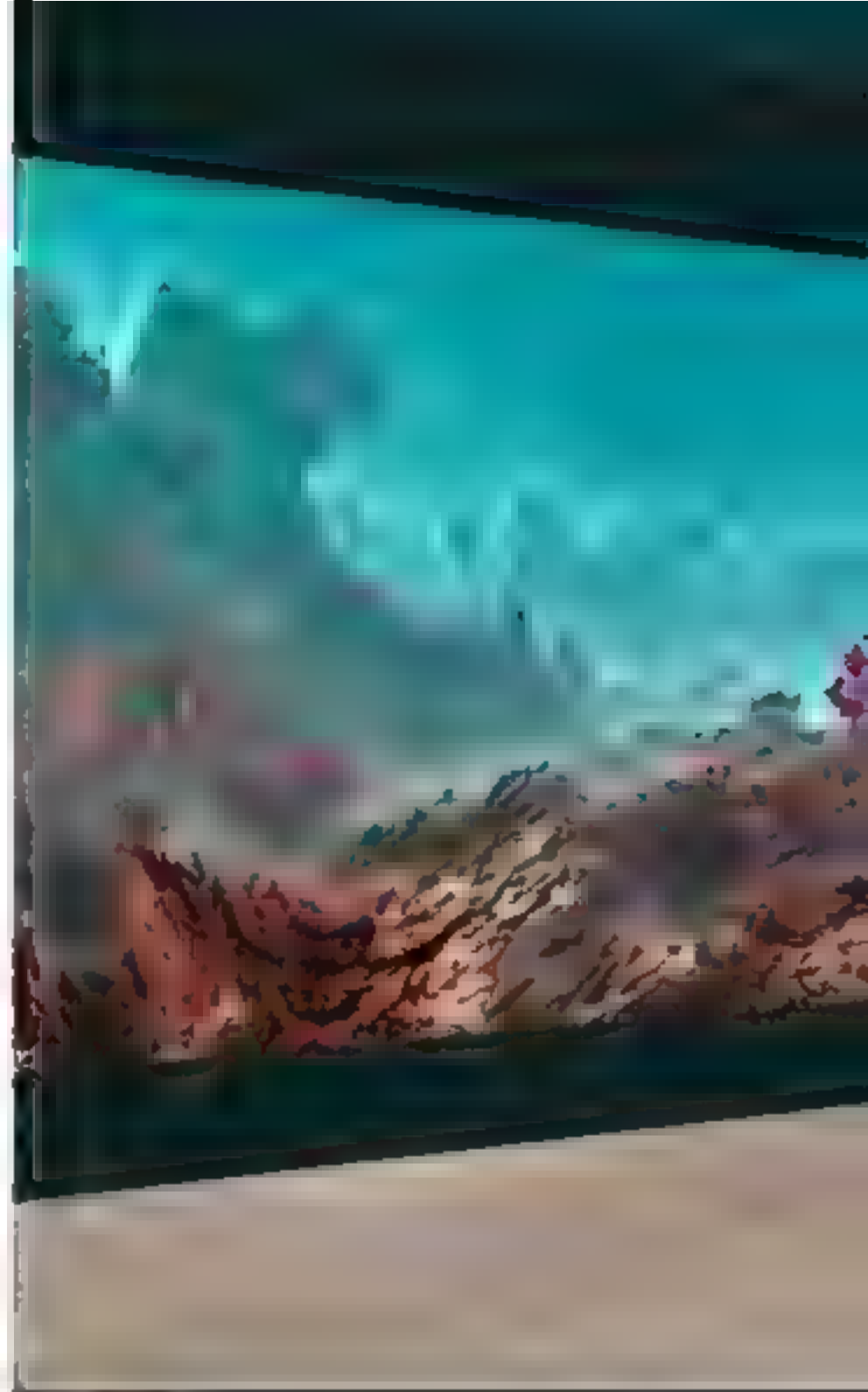
standing next to her, white dressed; a nurse came up in my mind. Her name on a tag: 'Cindy.' Cindy nodded.

The lady next to my bed, whom I recognize now as Jami Mills, answers with one word: "Partially." This makes me curious: "What part and how do you know?" Again Jami addresses the nurse, Cindy, with a nod. I see this as an answer and Jami continues: "I got a copy of your dream out of the database, as you had a signed contract to write a cover story for my magazine ... and I would like your dream to be published." I must have looked shocked to hear this, as Jami continues, touching my hand. "No worries, it is a standard procedure on a virus infection of this kind."

I feel lost. "I want to see what was real and what was not," I say. "He is allowed to travel, with proper security of course," the nurse Cindy said. "I will inform Angela." Jami Mills stands up. "Let's do it now, as I am running short of time."

So I stand now where I was in my dream on a flying rock in the air. I see the ocean below - endless open water. I, named by my creator First Prim, raise my hand. I press the button with the sign of a footprint on it and the Genesis happens, witnessed by Jami Mills, Cindy, Angela and Doc What.

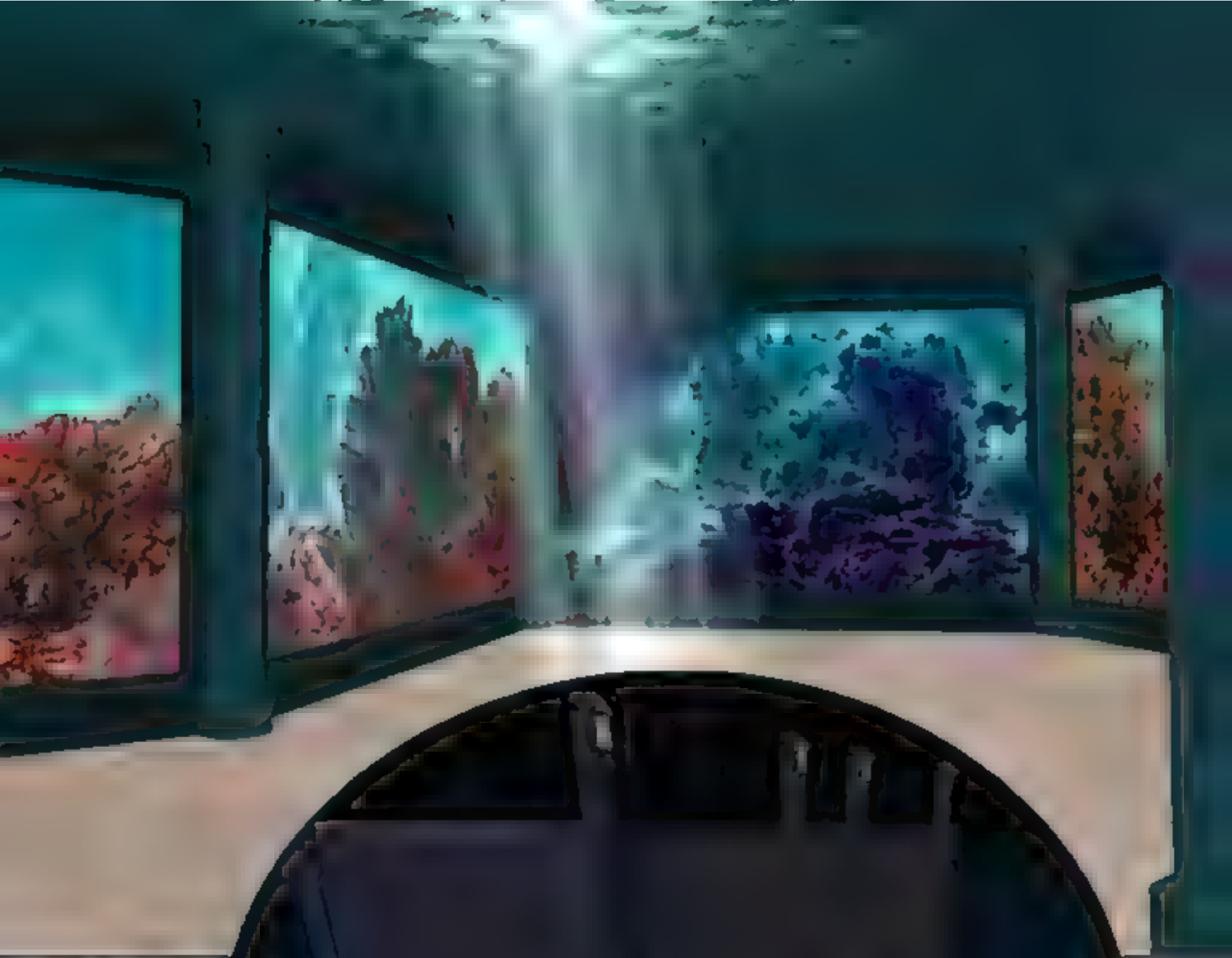
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Location:
grid Metropolis

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hypergrid.org:

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RIFT HORIZON



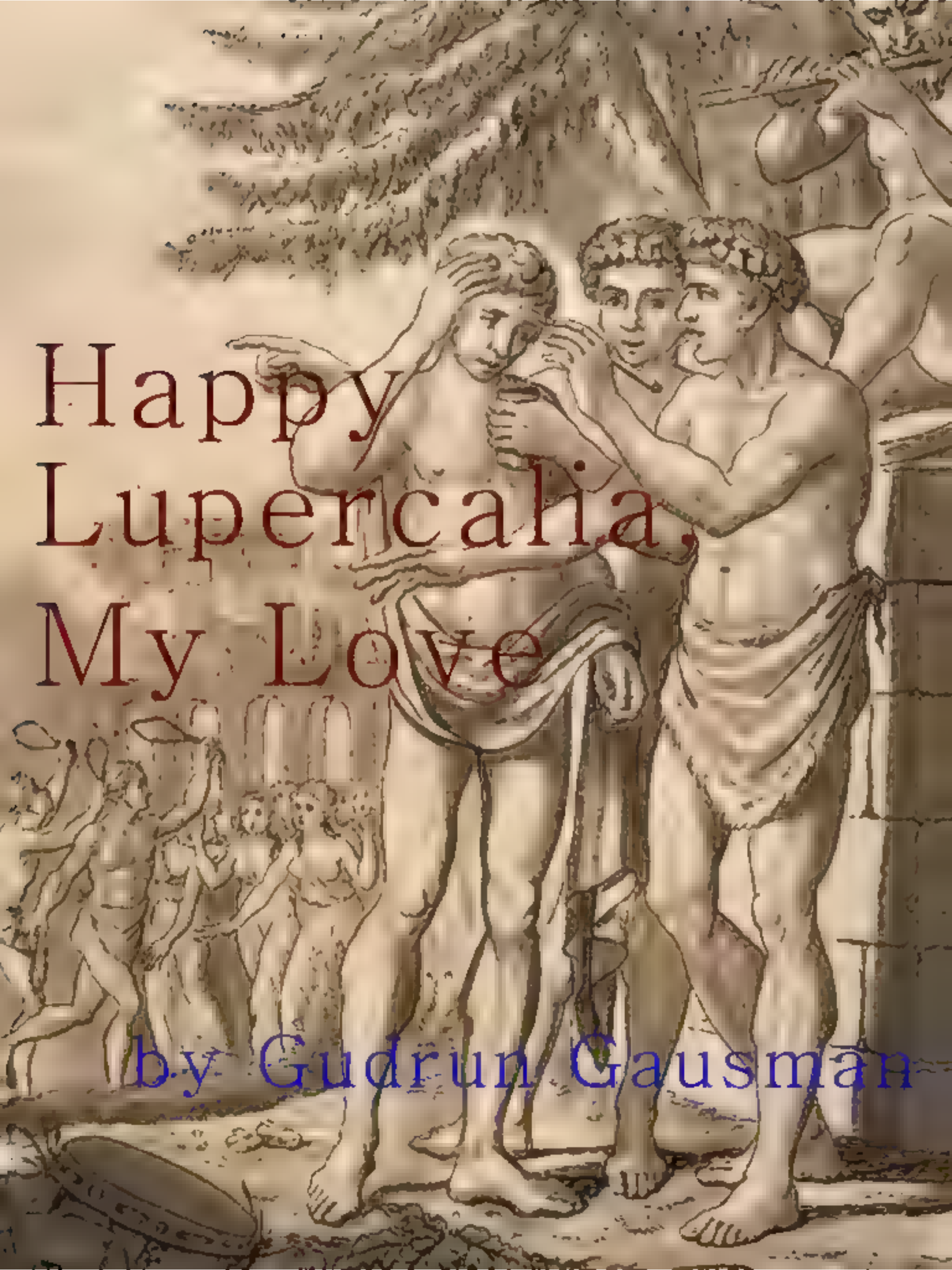
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jami mills





Happy
Lupercalia,
My Love

by Gudrun Gausman

What's Your Issue?

a monthly advice column by
Gudrun Gausman

Please send a lock of your hair by return mail

Dear Gudrun -

Valentine's Day? I hate to sound cynical, but I find these made-up holidays to be kind of unnecessary. Like most holidays, they start out reasonable. But then capitalism kicks in. Corporations jump them like jack rabbits, making up excuses to waste paper, plastic, and money.

I don't need chocolate strawberries, big bouquets of flowers, or personalized teddy bears, and, sadly, I have no SO (except my cat) to give me a valentine or receive one from me. I can't even go out to eat 'cuz the restaurants are all full of "lovers."

So maybe I'm bitter. But where did Valentine's Day come from, anyway, and if I get an SO, what do I do?

Hopelessly,

Val

Dear Val -

Sigh Pagan partying is once again to blame. Secretary's Day is made up ... Boss's Day is made up ... Valentine's Day, not so much. LOL

Lupercalia

The date on which Valentine's Day is celebrated derives from the Pagan feasts honoring Juno and celebrating "Lupercalia." February 14th was Feast of Juno, Goddess of Women and Marriage. Directly following on the 15th was Lupercalia, a feast dedicated to Faunus, God of Agriculture, and to Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, who were suckled by a she-wolf, "Lupa."



A special class of priest began each Lupercalia with the sacrifice of goats and a dog. After various rituals, thongs were cut from the skins of the sacrificed animals. Naked young men then

each grabbed a thong and ran around the Palatine Hill, spanking any young woman who came near them. A spank with a thong was supposed to render a woman fertile. Fertility, of course, is meaningless without sex, so as time passed, sex became Lupercalia's focus for the average Roman. Needless to say, it was a popular feast.



In Rome, the lives of young boys and girls were strictly separated, but on the eve of Lupercalia, the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would then draw a girl's name from a jar. He would then be partners for the

duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted and sometimes they would marry. But often they didn't, LOL. Though Lupercalia continued for at least 150 years after Constantine legalized Christianity, this custom obviously needed Christianizing. The Pope criminalized Lupercalia in the 5th century, and declared February 14th St. Valentine's Day.

St. Valentine's Day

There were at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories all emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and romantic figure.

One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for these young men. Valentine performed weddings for the soldiers who were forbidden to marry, and when he was discovered, Claudius ordered him imprisoned and put to death.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman



prisons, where they were being beaten and tortured. In yet another legend, an imprisoned Valentine healed his jailer's daughter, and sent the first "valentine" greeting after he subsequently fell in love with her. It is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still in use today.

During the centuries, elements of Lupercalian activity, of course, survived. Change of seasons and the notion that birds started their mating in mid-February added to the idea that Valentine's Day should be a day for romance. By the middle Ages, for whatever reason, Valentine had become one of the most popular saints in England and France.

Greetings

Valentine greetings were always popular (even if it was a spanking with a thong), but written Valentine's Day

cards didn't begin to appear until after 1400. In 1415, Charles, Duke of Orleans, wrote a poem to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. This is the oldest known valentine (spellings modernized):

*I am already sick of love,
My very gentle Valentine,
Since for me you were born too soon,
And I for you was born too late.
God forgives he who has estranged
Me from you for the whole year.
I am already, etc.
My very gentle, etc.
Well might I have suspected,
Having such a destiny, cousin
Thus would have happened this day,
How much that Love would have
commanded.
I am already, etc.*

Well, manner of expression changes over the centuries, I guess. Etc.

Somewhat later, in 1420, King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois, thus creating the greeting card industry. LOL. (Spellings not modernized.)

*Seynte Valentine of custome yeere by
yeere
Men have an usance, in this regioun
To loke and serche Cupides kalendar,
And chose theyr choyse by grete affec-
cioun,*

*Such has been move with Cupides
nocioun,
Takyng theyre choyse as theyre sort
doth falle;
But I love oon whiche excelleth alle.
It certainly has a more professional
touch...*



Americans probably began exchanging hand-made valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland

began selling the first mass produced valentines. Howland, the "Mother of the Valentine," made elaborate creations out of lace, ribbons, and colorful pictures.

After a while, things got spicier: "I want to do things so wild with you that I don't know how to say them." - Anaïs Nin to Henry Miller

Today, according to retail organizations, 52 percent of Americans plan to send at least one Valentine's Day card. Of course, today we also have the Internet, with a variety of automatic valentine generators. But be careful...

"My dearest Minx,

"With the light of love as my guide, the feather of an angel as my pen, and the blood of Aphrodite as ink, I weave my thoughts of you upon this parchment.

"Upon my chest I carve your name with a dagger of carnal desire, so the world may knoweth that only you lie within my heart. (I know the tattoo says "Minnie," but that's short for "Minx," and I know that in time you will come to love the nickname, tho no one has ever called you by it.)

"Such charm and radiant beauty as yours could calm the wildest beast and entice the devil himself into surrender, simply so he could look upon your face

with devotion.

"What manner of creature can resist those radiant blue pools which you call eyes? When I stare deep into them, their hypnotic powers make me want to splash around. Ummm...

'How could anyone ignore your beautiful radiant blonde hair flowing in the wind and sun? Such beauty reminds me of the color of canaries against the sky. Canaries are cute, even though they bite. Don't you think Tweety Pie is cute? Big Bird is also cute and yellow. I heard that birds begin mating in mid-February.

'Oh, darling. I simply love clubbing with you! Those baby seals never knew what hit them. No...Wait...

'Oh, darling. I simply love clubbing with you! It's so much fun to make a complete ass of myself with my inept dancing, and it's even more fun watching you and your friends cruising around jumping strays! And then I'm asked to again distract the patrons ... I haven't had to buy a drink for you or your friends yet!!

"Words alone cannot express how unique my love for you is. I love you, and you only, I swear that to you my love .. OK, perhaps I'm getting a little too excited 'cuz I also love my Bentley, but we're not talking about that right

now! (Besides the fact that I just mentioned it, but that part was allowed because the context was a little bit relevant, or not.) Anyway our combined incomes may make it possible to actually keep the car!

"I can't remember if I've already told you this but I really do love your derriere. It's possibly the finest derriere in all Christendom. It's such a turn-on to look at and it's one of the many reasons I love you. Sometimes I wish I could do nothing but stare at your derriere all day. Oh, your eyes are up there ... Forgot ...

"Anyway darling, I must close. I really can't wait to see you again, especially if you are gonna be wearing latex or leather underwear! I've often wondered

how you would look wearing that stuff, and many a night has gone by where I would sit and fantasize about it. Sometimes I would even lie down in bed and fantasize about it. Go on, surprise me! I would have no need to pay for those on-demand videos any more.

"I wish you the happiest Valentine's Day ever, my dear sweet lover, with every fiery spark of desire within my burning soul. I cry tears of blood for you, with every second that passes without you!

"Forever and eternally yours and yours only,

Val

xxooxxooxx"

Love

What's love got to do with it?

Anthropologists see love as three distinct brain systems facilitating mating and reproduction:

- Sex drive (passion)
- Romance (obsession, infatuation)
- Attachment (stability and security)

Passion gets you out there looking for a range of partners. Romance evolved to focus your sex drive on one person, thus leading to stability and security for a family. Various combinations of these systems can produce successful relationships, but ideally all three complement each other. Lupercalia focused on passion and romance, but inevitably led to attachment as well, doubtless helped along by less permissive times. But sending your cat a valentine is a real expression of attachment as well as romantic love, presumably without sex. :-/

Valentine's Day is hugely commercialized 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate are sold each year for this holiday, conversation hearts are consumed in massive quantities, and cute teddy bears hold hearts in every shop window. But frankly, this level of consumption is nothing compared to the

other holidays.


Sorry you're bitter, but it's only one day, though, so don't let it get to you too much. Sure, some parts of Valentine's Day are nauseating (think about all those people all having intercourse at the same time ...), but take solace in the fact that tomorrow will be just another day. If V-Day bothers you so much, just stay home with your cat and clean your apartment.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to start preparing a five-course dinner for the love of my life. Naked.

TC ~

Gudrun





Kat Carlson: Nail Artist

an interview with
StarGazer Daylig



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There are a few things that bother me a lot in SL. Eyelashes and nails are at the top of that list. I think most girls know the problem I am referring to. So it's nice to get an opportunity to meet up with, and introduce you to, someone on the cutting edge of fixing this problem.

I introduce you to Kat Carter (Kathrin.Dassin). This is one busy lady, but she spent a few hours with me recently and I think you should all hear what she had to say.

I also want to highly recommend you look at her creations and see if they work for you. I think you will be pleasantly surprised.

Here is that interview:

SD: I see you have been in SL for over eight years. That is quite a while. What got you into SL so long ago, before it was so fashionable?

KC: Well, originally I was really big into the roleplay community, and when Second Life came out, it was a way for me to meet with several of my roleplay friends all across the world in one central place instead of the IRC chat rooms we used.

SD: Sorry, I am newer but what is IRC?

KC: IRC is a chat room that was de-

veloped online for people to communicate in. Think SL but text only

SD: So we've come full cycle in one sense, text to phone calls to SL and back to texting in RL. Of course, Twitter and Snapchat and FB and so many other things are there as well. Did you have an interest in fashion early on, or did you move in that direction later?

KC: I had a very small interest in fashion when I first started Second Life. At the time, it was more of the roleplay fashions, and I did do some modeling for a few stores about maybe four years ago, I think it was. And then it expanded from there once I decided I needed to try something new.

SD: From roleplay to fashion is quite a jump. Tell me a bit about that leap.

KC: Well, that leap came when I decided I needed to start earning Lindens - without having to buy them - to support my roleplay shopping. I took on a job at a nail salon in Second Life. I was just a simple Customer Service Rep, but I got 100L a day or so, and commission if someone purchased while I was on shift. It was a good job. Then the owner asked me if I would like to be her Manager, which I took on with gusto. That's really when I started to pay more attention to the fashion industry here in SL, as I had to find new ways of marketing for her store. I started going to the

fashion shows and watching the various competitions for what people were wearing when it came to their nails.

SD: May I ask the name of that store, and if it still is active in SL?

KC: The name of the salon was *Studio Nails*. It is no longer an active brand in SL.

SD: OK. Well, do continue then with your journey.

KC: Over a few months, I became increasingly interested in designing nail fashions, as I love a good manicure, and what woman doesn't? Well, the designer was tired of the store and an agreement was worked out for me to purchase it, and begin to create my own designs; however, that agreement fell through. So I chose to continue doing what I had begun to enjoy, and thus

SD: Even that is long for SL. But may I digress and ask why nails, specifically? I will add that so often nails are so important and so often so poorly designed by others.

KC: Truthfully, I had thought about doing clothes, but I was not one for template designs and trying to build a skirt or a pair of pants. Even with the SL clothing layers, it didn't really appeal to me. Even though there is so much that can be done with them, I have often felt that with clothing, one can be very limited in design choices. There are, after all, only so many different types of shirts, pants and skirts. It can get boring after a while.

SD: Interesting. Did you also find nails particularly appealing in RL? One of my co-worker's nails were incredibly long and coiled.

As long as I can afford it, my nails are always done. I learned early in life: your hands are one of the most important aspects of your life.

my true entrance into the fashion industry of SL had begun.

SD: That was about four years ago?

KC: Almost four years ago, yes.

KC: Yeah, I do. As long as I can afford it, my nails are always done. I learned early in life: your hands are one of the most important aspects of your life. A firm handshake can mean the difference between getting a job or not getting a job. For a female, if your nails are

not properly maintained, they can make your hands look old and dirty, making you an undesirable candidate in anything you do.

SD: Good teaching. Was that from your mother or sister or someone else?

KC: Actually that was from my uncle!

SD: Did he manicure his nails too?

KC: Yes, he did manicure his nails as well. He and his daughter.

SD: Cool. Did you see early on the deep flaws in nails in SL?

KC I did. I was never happy with the glover layer base for nail polish in world. They were very bland and covered one's whole finger. That was how I managed upon *Studio Nails*. I was shopping for something that was more realistic for nails in SL.

SD: So they had the first decent set of nail manicures that you found in SL?

KC: Yes, they had, and

were very reasonably priced.

SD: Do you recall what their prices were back then?

KC: They were about 125-150L per nail set. If you bought the Hud they had, it was 2500L, but it came with pretty much unlimited possibilities.

SD: Wow! That must have been very much a game changer.

KC: For me, it was truly a game changer.

SD: What were you goals originally and have they changed at all? What things did you want to improve upon?

KC: Originally, my game plan was just to continue designing nails. That, of course, did change once I opened my store. One of the things I wanted to improve upon was the lack of variety in nail fashions in the SL fashion industry. When you looked around the grid, it was pretty much the same thing from every nail designer: buy this Hud; wear this nail; get this design. The designs themselves didn't really seem to be all that exciting, or stand out. Or they were so far-fetched they couldn't be worn at all. So, my main goal was to bring more of the RL nail fashions I had worn or seen - - or simply imagined would be good designs - - into SL, as well as improve the selection of



nails for men, and then later on the petite avis.

SD: And without the exposure to toxic fumes I might add!

KC: Exactly. LOL.

SD: What helped you make a breakthrough to precise manicures? Was it some dream? Some insight? Computer graphic skills? Or just dogged determination?

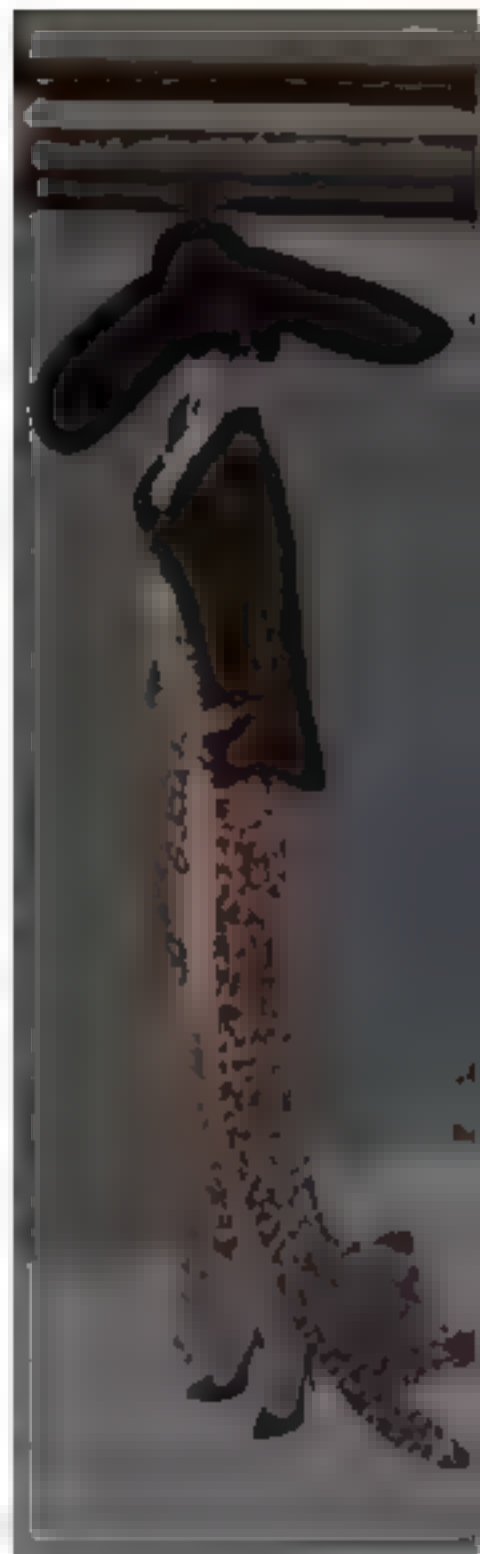
KC: Hmmm. I guess it was simply my will to improve what I already knew how to do. I had been working in Photoshop for years beforehand so I had some skill in the graphic design department. I would have to say more than anything it was my dogged determination and desire to learn.

SD: Good for you! So again, what were those big leaps, those big insights you had to change nails and manicures for the better? Don't disclose any company secrets lol. For example, do you only use SLinks?

KC I do not use only SLinks, I sell a combination. I have mesh nails, prim nails and the Slinks. Every single design I've created is hand drawn by me. They are not simply copy and pasted from an outside source. And I draw my Inspiration from things around me, my clients, as well as the RL fashion industry.

SD: For my readers, would you just explain the difference between the three?

KC: Ok. The Prim nails are old fashioned prims that sit atop your fingers. I have those pre-sized for avis with hands between five and 35. If one changes their hand size, you will have to change the attachment. Those nails come in varying lengths, and some have gems on them. The mesh nails are liquid mesh, though it may be called other things by other designers. These nails will change size with your avatars hand if you adjust your shape. They include a Hud which allows for either a quick color change, or a design change. The SLink nails I do two different ways. I have the SLink appliers, which change the nail texture on the hand itself, and then I have SLink attachments, which are pre-sized to the avatar hand size of 10, the standard in the SL modeling industry. These attachments are done on commission request only, as I have to purchase the hand type if I don't have it



already, then fit the initial prim attachment to the SLink hand nail bed.

I hope you followed that . kind of technical but the difference between most mediocre quality nails and what you should be using if you do at all!

SD: That is a lot of good information. Thanks!

KC: My pleasure.

SD: Did you learn this all yourself or did you have accomplices, allies or teachers?

the effect to work correctly. Truthfully, working with eyelashes is easier!

SD: That is because you are a hand nail designer. Is that the correct title for what you do, btw?

KC: I would prefer the title of nail artists, as I feel the designs themselves are a work of art more than a simple design.

SD: So, I would like to ask you again if you work alone or have collaborators.

I think when you see the nails she did with the fire-breathing dragon, you will be amazed.

KC: The old-fashioned prim nails I learned while I was working my arrangement with the owner of studio nails. Everything else I learned on my own.

SD: It is a very difficult thing to do right. Almost as hard as eyelashes.

KC: It is extremely difficult, to be honest, when working with the 3-D designs, or Gem Designs as I call them, because you are working on such a small surface with very tiny pieces, and each piece must be fitted just right for

KC: For the most part I work alone. I will do collaborations with makeup, dress and jewelry designers to make nails to match their dresses, makeups or jewelry if they request them.

I think when you see the nails she did with the fire-breathing dragon you will be astounded. That is coming towards the end of this article.

SD: I see that you have your base in Moondancer Boutique. Lovely name, btw. How long has that been open?

KC: Moondancer Boutique has been

open for three years, going on four now

SD: How many locations do you have for your line of nails?

KC: At the moment I have the main store on the Voodoo Bayou sim. I have a small shop on the *Liv Glam, Glam Resorts* sim, and a smaller location at the *Magic of Trance* dance club. And finally, a small set up at the *Evolve Store* at the BOSL mall.

SD: Would you say your traffic is large, medium, or small and is it growing or steady?

KC: I would say my traffic is steadily growing.

SD: Great. I hope this exposure in rez will increase that.

KC: I hope so as well.

The philosophy of the designer is always interesting as noted here:

SD: Would you care to tell me who some of your peers are and politely, how your work differs from theirs?

KC: Hmmmm. That is a hard one truthfully, as everyone's work differs. There is, of course, *Mandala*. Everyone knows them for their large selection of nails that have attached jewelry

Whereas I do not create jewelry at all, I am a firm believer that you should not have to be forced to wear a particular set of nails to wear a certain set of jewelry, and you should not have to wear a certain set of jewelry in order to wear a specific set of nails. One should be free to mix and match their nails and jewelry as they see fit.

SD: I would definitely agree. That does bring me to your blog, which I read a bit of. So much of an independent streak in your writing that I would encourage readers to look there for a bit.

<http://katstruecolors.wordpress.com>

KC: Thank you so much, hehe. There's not much there, but that's because I blog when I have something important or thoughtful to say. But it does help at times to get me back to my work and keep my mind off something that is troubling me.

SD: It's a good way for the readers to get to know more about you, though, as I used it as one resource to understand you and your work.

KC: It truly is, though I should warn people, as I'm sure you've seen through the blog: on the blog I have no filter. While others may read it, it is a place for me to say what I feel, and I mean every word I say.

SD: Readers be warned! So I wanted to note how lovely your nails are today. Would you tell us what you have on first of all? Great pastels.

KC: Thank you. Today, I am wearing the Liv Glam, I can be That woman outfit, shoes are the Grace sandals from [GOS], hair is Bittersweet from Vanity. My skin is a custom creation from Dulce Secrets. My jewelry is the Eda set from LaZuri, and the nails are my next release this month called Fishscales.

SD: Thank you. What are you favorite nails that you have created? I know it may be hard to choose between them all.

KC: It's very hard, as each set I love. But I would have to say the set I made this year for Miss VW China is my all-time favorite. It's known as Dragon Breath. It was created for her national costume in the Miss Virtual World competition last December. They are SLink nail attachments that feature a fire-breathing dragon.

SD: Would you have a picture of that by any chance or would it be something we could see somewhere?

KC: I do not have a picture of them right now, The Vendor shots are being worked on as we speak, but I can put them on for you if you would like.

SD: Absolutely!

KC: There we are.

Now I got to see them and they are just as I say they are....something I never imagined in nails.....

SD: Incredible!

KC: All the texture work on the nails is hand done, from the Chinese character on the nails to the dragon scales.

SD: That is one of the most amazing things I have ever seen. Great work, Kat.

KC: Thank you very much. I enjoyed working on this set the most.

SD: Now, I have to ask if anyone, even a newer avatar, can put on these nails and avoid the problems of malfitting nails?

KC: Yes. If they have problems with them I'm always around to help get them to right fit

SD: So another barrier to SL virtual world disconnect is now solved! You must be gaining quite a following!

KC: It's been a long hard journey, but I have been gaining a happy customer base.

(And then a little bit about her vision for the future of nails.)

SD: What do you see for the future of

your artistry, Kat? What vision do you have, if you would care to share?

KC: Truthfully, I see the future of my artistry continuing to push boundaries of the SL nail industry as a whole, and not just stopping with the current enhancements. With the new year upon me here in SL, I can only see things expanding. I hope to continue the work I have started, some very big projects with a few very special friends and fellow designers here in SL, and truthfully to just continue to love what I do.

SD: Thank you so much Kat for that word of advice.

KC: You're very welcome, Star.

(At this point, I took the time to visit at her main store in Voodoo Bayou.)

KC: This is the main store where all my products can be found.

SD: Great. Thanks. Is there always on-line help for figuring out any technical details?

...just remember that your nails really can make all the difference between an okay look and a simply stunning look.

SD: Great. Do you have any final thoughts for fashionistas about nails, beginners or the average avatar?

KC: Yes. Just remember that even though we are in SL, your nails are just as important as the rest of your avatar. Regardless who you get your nails through inworld, just remember that your nails really can make all the difference between an okay look and a simply stunning look.

KC: Each package comes with a notecard with instructions for the nail type purchased. And I get my offlines in e-mail, so as soon as I am able to see it, I respond to the message for assistance.

SD: Good. Does your husband help you too?

KC: He actually has nothing to do with the business. He will log into me if a customer IMs him for a redelivery because the vendor decided not to work,

but he doesn't really do much when it comes to the store, other than spend my money. LOL. He shops more than your average woman.

SD: Ha! That's funny! Afraid to ask what for! Well, let me ask you as the store owner and artiste to make a suggestion for me today if I may.

KC: For what you are wearing currently, I would go with the *Diamond Confidence 3-D* nail set or the *Addiction* mesh nail set. Each texture set comes with between five and ten designs, with some of the newer ones containing upwards of 20 designs

SD: The Gen LQ mesh is very lovely as well, I see! Just to name an example I see here.

KC: Thank you so very much. I put a lot of work into each design.

SD: Wonderful. Thank you, Kat!

KC: My pleasure.

So, that concluded my interview. To be



honest, I found it much more interesting than I had anticipated. I hope you will explore and find that as well.

As always, feel free to contact me about anything. And always have a fashionable day!

Love always,

Stargazer Daylight

Voodoo Bayou (176,223,25)

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Reinventing Ourselves by Alcinia Rossini

Out with the old and in with the new. With the start of 2014, it's not uncommon to think of goals and changes each of us would like to accomplish or achieve. Each year, Second Life puts on the New You Contest, with a chance to win \$L10,000. The criteria involve a new makeover, to be a better or different version of ourselves. One photo is to be taken, then submitted and uploaded onto the Facebook page, and the most voted photo wins. Sounds simple, but I can imagine that the amount of time and lindens involved reinventing our avatars makes this task far from simple.

I myself have never been a contestant, but it's piqued my interest a couple of times. It got me thinking, in what ways have I changed since the beginning of my time here, seven years ago? This introduces an even broader question that all of us should be asking ourselves.

How have I evolved since I started? For some, that could be today, the beginning of your Second Life, with \$L0, an untouched appearance and a lot of curiosity. I can clearly remember how I was a bit overwhelmed and filled with too many questions to process on my first day. As for others, they could live and breathe this world, and even make a living here. One thing is certain - the possibilities are endless, and there are really no rules or code of ethics written in stone that require following

It's great that there's no utopian society, governmental system or monarchy that rules us. In many ways, we are all alike, yet so vastly different. The one thing we share in common is our desire to be in Second Life. In my seven years, I've really had no sense of purpose, yet I've had lots of observations, explorations and many conversations. I do not think I've explored all there is, or understood all the events that make this world the way it is. What has inspired me, and put me in awe, is the difference that a place like this can make on others.

In 2006, a video compilation of Second Lifers was on display on the main website. One unforgettable video of a real life musician shows him in one scene flying through the sky, and in the next, performing in front of a large audience at the Acropolis. He's singing during the entire video, and at the end shows who he really is - a composer who shines with such talent and has the ability to perform in-world, but is a paraplegic.

Another moving story illustrating the difference Second Life has made involves a group of individuals who are autistic, non-verbal, or had some other challenges, but who had the ability to thrive in the world through meeting at a dance club with regularly held events. One of the individuals wasn't shy about saying that he felt like he was able to connect and make friends in a way that

he never thought possible. My brief attempts at trying to make a difference included hosting group lead meetings that discussed the impacts of virtual and real world relationships. The group still exists, with a membership of 40- some members still a part of it.

A region gone but not forgotten was a sim named Support for Healing. It was one of my favorite destinations, as it was simple and peaceful. You could simply just be and relax. Many meetings were held there, focused on anxiety and depression. I even hosted some of the relationship discussions.

For me, when it comes right down to it, I'm no longer chasing love in-world, or having expectations for what Second Life needs to make it an interesting experience. The many conversations I've had, which have allowed me to freely express my innermost thoughts in a way that didn't scare or restrict me, have kept me coming back for more.

It's in these conversations where we reveal who we are in our most intimate moments, that bring to mind thought-provoking questions, that stimulate more conversations we can't get in normal everyday chats. It's the individuals who reach out for another soul to listen to, and feel for a moment that someone cares about their concerns and connects in a deep way - - people who feel limited, bound, or unable to experience

life in the way they wish, for whatever reason, that bring them in-world. These are the reasons I stay, and what keep the SL experience exciting. There's never a dull moment, and the world is ours. The experience can be played out in whatever way works. No rhyme or reason, but simply another element of life.



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Happy Rezz Day
by Harry Bailey

This wonderful January evening, I sit on my SL home deck under a perfect moonlit evening and watch the waves break on the rocks as my lighthouse blinks a consistent red beacon, announcing my little corner of SL to any stray shipping. This is, of course, quite wonderful, because as I turn my head a bit to the right, I look out along my tree covered land at the foot of fresh snow that has fallen for almost 24 hours now. Beach vs. Blizzard - is this really a fair comparison of lives?

Yet this is one of those constant challenges for all of us long-term SLites. And yes, I do realize the interesting image that brings to mind, SLIGHT! Yet, in which of these lives do we feel slighted if at all?

Many comparisons come about when SL and RL run across each other for all of us. One that I have thought a lot about, here at the start of 2014, is what importance rezz days have on our avatars. On January 29th, I celebrated my seventh anniversary here in SL, my rezz day.

In all those years I never really thought much about that special day, and yet I can still remember my RL 7th birthday. Just what importance do rezz days have for us here in SL? We never age, of course. I myself am a nice constant 28, with the dance moves to support that

image. We attach no special significance to any of our rezz days.

Many years ago, I had a co-worker come into work in a highly upset and emotional state. When I asked what had her so upset, she could hardly respond. Finally, she blurted out that today was her birthday, and it was the last one! Of course, my thoughts suddenly went to some serious illness, but before I could even respond, this co-worker quickly in one very long run-on sentence informed me that all her 'Good' birthdays had been used up!

When I turned 13, I was now an official 'Teenager'! At 14, I had become a high school freshman and no longer a 'Child' in elementary school. 16 brought on a driver's license, and with 18 came the right to vote and graduation from high school. Then the most wonderful birthday of all, TWENTY-ONE! Legal age in the USA, and the right to enjoy alcoholic beverages legally. It seems that this young person had turned 21, and now had nothing left to appreciate from her birthdays.

I did my best to console her, but suddenly I could not really make much of a case for turning any of the dreaded decade ages, 30, 40, 50, 60? Somehow, getting a government check when she became 65 did not seem like much to look forward to for this young, newly-minted, legal 21 year old? We talked

for a while and finally she began to listen, as I made the case that the joys of life did not come from birthdays but from an ever-changing lifetime ahead of joys, wonders, adventures and, yes, even sorrows to come.

I spoke of the joy of my marriage, the wonder of being there for the births of our two children, career success, adventures across the land, and of having someone to share all those adventures with. We chatted about rediscovering the newness in sharing in your children's birthdays, each and every one of them. This brings me back to SL. Here, those rezz days do not come with any special prizes.

Maybe we should all get to vote in some wonderful Linden democracy when we reach our 18th rezz day, but don't expect that to happen. We get to have unlimited sex and drink all the alcohol we want to with no risk of disease of hangovers, on our first day in SL. For those who seek out schooling in SL, they can have their avatar in primary school one day and start on their first day at Hillcrest College the next.

And about driver's licenses? We teleport everywhere and can "Drive" anything and everything from trains, to submarines and pirate ships, right off the bat. Not well, of course, but hey! Even I admit to an evening of aban-

doned HOG riding across a sim with a friend during one of my early years, to the point where we set the entire sim on fire from our continual crashes. I apparently was channeling Bruce Willis at the time, perhaps?

So, exactly what is the point of thinking about your rezz days? I think it has to do with the fact that most of us are past those special wonderful days of parties and rewards in those "other" lives, so here we do try to share a special day each and every year with our friends. Hear a few happy rezz day gestures play across a sim. Have good friends drop us notecards or IM us with greetings and perhaps memories as well.

Of course, by the time you read this in the February issue of rez, I will have celebrated my seventh rezz day, and I can assure all of you that I have enjoyed each and every moment of those seven years in SL. So many wonderful memories, and at the same time, so many lost friends along the way for various reasons. My SL partner and RL wife and life-mate was in SL for less than a year and dropped in once or twice since then, so not all of us are cut out for a long life in SL. Perhaps SL years have some multiplier, say one SL year = 7 RL years, perhaps. But from my point of view, I prefer to think that each and every day in SL is once again my 28th birthday, and I shall continue to act accordingly, dancing the night

away and sharing each moment with all of you my friends of SL!

Now get out there and party on, like every day in SL is your very special, one-of-a-kind 28th birthday as well. And if that was not a good year for you for whatever reason, then be 21 or 39 again and enjoy. The point of all of

this is that we are ageless here in SL, where the laws of time and physics do not apply, so dance the night away; or as Gundrun suggested last month, eat your oatmeal and play more Zyngo. If that does not appeal to you, then perhaps you can follow one of Sedona's resolutions for 2014 and get out there and have more virtual sex!

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